

E-SERVICE TO MANAGE CONTACT INFORMATION WITH PRIVACY LEVELS

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method of providing an electronic business card (EBC) access and organization service on the Web. The cardholder database is accessible and searchable from any browser connected to the Internet or the EBC service may be installed behind a conventional firewall and thus accessible only to intranet users. The service thus provides easy access to cardholder contact information with privacy assured by use of integrated access restrictions. Access to and delivery of contact information by the service is not limited to a Web browser interface as commonly known today. The service provides multi-mode access and/or data delivery interfaces. The service also provides an export feature that formats search results into a pre-defined file structure readable by a conventional contact management programs. Custom export file formats may also be defined provide even wider connectivity and cross-platform utility.

Access to individual records is controlled at both the record level and the field level, with multiple privacy levels for each field, in addition to the well-known "public" and "private" levels. Users having certain permissions are permitted to read a defined group of records, though not necessarily all fields in each record. A location tracking feature is also provided to allow the cardholder to rapidly designate a pre-defined contact location. Alternately, the cardholder may define a temporary contact location not normally stored in the database system. Electronic mail sent by the cardholder is automatically formatted to contain a signature hypertext link directing recipients of the email to the EBC service. This hyperlink enables the recipient of the email to rapidly access the EBC system to locate the cardholder and/or obtain additional information.